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ABSTRACT

In 1994, a 2-day symposium was conducted on a broadened, more inclusive mission for rural schools--rural schools functioning as community learning and service centers. The symposium aimed to enhance the knowledge base related to five key dimensions that must be planned, implemented, and evaluated when designing rural schools in this fashion: community development; economic development; partnerships among family, school and community; school-to-work transition; and integrating education, health, and social services. Part 1 of the report briefly describes challenges facing rural schools, including limited financial resources, educational opportunities, and rural employment prospects. Part 2 describes the nature of the symposium. Ten experts in the five key areas responded to questions about basic assumptions and key definitions in their particular area of focus; the major problems (needs, barriers) that inhibit rural schools from operating effectively in this area; the major strengths (capacities, facilitators) that enable rural schools to operate effectively in this area; the design tasks that must be accomplished to further the concept of schools functioning as community learning and service centers; and what additional research questions and development initiatives need to be pursued. The next four sections contain participants' responses to the questions and present a number of assumptions and issues related to the five key dimensions. All participants supported the concept of rural schools serving as community learning and service centers and strongly agreed that educational change cannot take place unless the communities in which the schools reside are both viable and sustainable. The last section of the report consists of concluding perspectives on public policy formation and program development. Contains 11 references. (LP)

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PERSPECTIVES ON DESIGNING RURAL SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SERVICE CENTERS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary v

Preface ix

I. Recognizing the Unique Rural Challenges 1

II. Framing Policy and Program Issues 3

III. Forging Solid Foundations in the Community 5

- Basic Assumptions and Definitions 5
- Problem Areas and Related Concerns 6
- Strengths of Rural Schools, Communities, and School/Community Relationships 6
- Design Tasks 8
- Research and Development Tasks 8

IV. Developing Family/School/Community Partnerships 11

- Basic Concepts and Programs 11
- Problem Areas and Related Concerns 13
- Strengths of Rural Family/School/Community Relationships 13
- Design Tasks 14
- Research and Development Tasks 15

V. Developing School-to Work Transition Programs 17

- School-to-Work Transition Concepts 17
- Problems with Rural School-to-Work Transition 17
- Strengths of Rural School-to-Work Transition 18
- Design Tasks 19
- Research and Development Tasks 20

VI. Developing Integrated Services Initiatives 23

- Basic Concepts and Underlying Assumptions 23
- Problems with Service Integration in Rural Areas 25
- Strengths of Service Integration in Rural Areas 26
- Design Tasks 27
- Research and Development Tasks 28

VII. Concluding Perspectives 31

- Diverse Perspectives Emerging from the Symposium 31
- Policy Perspectives and Implications 32
- Program Perspectives and Implications 35

References 39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1994, Research for Better Schools, with the support of the Lilly Endowment, Inc., conducted a two-day symposium on a broadened, more inclusive mission for rural schools, i.e., rural schools functioning as community learning and service centers. The primary purpose was to enhance the knowledge base relating to five key dimensions that must be planned, implemented, and evaluated when designing rural schools in this fashion, namely, community development; economic development; family/school/community partnerships; school-to-work transition; and integrating education, health, and social services.

Each participant, ten recognized experts in these five areas, responded to the following questions: What are the basic assumptions and key definitions in your particular area of focus? What are the major problems that inhibit -- and the major strengths that enable -- rural schools to operate effectively in this area? What design tasks must be accomplished to further the concept of schools functioning as community learning and service centers? What additional research questions and development initiatives need to be pursued?

Two of the most important insights and affirmations were as follows. None of the participants challenged the basic assumption that the rural school serving as a community learning and service center is a significant and innovative concept. Although cautions were raised, the fundamental notion was supported. Most of cautions concerned implementation issues such as where one starts (top down or bottom up) and the nature and degree of the school's involvement and potential leadership roles. Second, the participants affirmed that such schools cannot be designed -- or redesigned -- unless the communities in which the schools reside are themselves both viable and sustainable.

Daryl Hobb's definition of community was highly insightful in reflecting that "community" should not be seen as a particular place but rather as a set of relationships. The concept also can be viewed as the ability or capacity to act jointly and effectively on one's own behalf. Moreover, there must be a distinction between development <u>of</u> communities (community development) and development <u>in</u> communities (economic development). Although we can create opportunities for community development, the question is whether or not we can sustain them over a period of time. From an economic perspective, David Mulkey stressed the need to think of community as a functional entity, i.e., an economic region. A community exists because it provides some set of services and because people choose to live there and take advantage of those services. Economic development should be viewed not only as growth but should be taken to mean the capacity to adjust to changing conditions. Evidence suggests that certain intangible factors (e.g. education, managerial, and leadership abilities) are critical to economic development. Paul Nachtigal suggested that the concept of "bioregionalism" connotes the creation of regionally appropriate means of living and livelihood and that its success will depend on the degree to which its advocates can create workable economics, technologies, material resources, and education forms that are "rooted in a particular bioregion."

Joyce Epstein presented a concept that is fundamental to designing schools as community learning centers, namely, overlapping spheres of influence, a model for understanding and developing school/family relationships. The model is seen as spheres that by design can be "pushed together or pulled apart" by practices and interpersonal forces in each environment. Epstein also identified six types of family/school/community partnerships that form a framework for how schools can build comprehensive and appropriate partnerships: basic obligations of families; basic obligations of schools; involvement at school; involvement in learning activities at home; involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy; and school collaboration with the community. Lori Connors Tadros explored the nature and

importance of family literacy programs that address parents' and children's literacy needs, programs that typically offer preschool or school age-services, parent-child activities and services, and adult education, particularly for those who missed educational opportunities "the first time around" and who did not graduate from high school or develop job-related skills.

A number of school-to-work issues were identified, including Jonathan Sher's insights on the value of school-based enterprises and entrepreneurial education; Morgan Lewis' affirmation of the need for career education and development and Joan Wills' emphasis on the opportunities that exist for educators to think in new ways about school-to-work issues, particularly since the passage of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. She asserted that the Act is the first piece of legislation at the national level in the last 25 to 30 years that can be conceived as helping to build capacity across institutions and to create new institutions. She noted that the legislation enables us to begin to create different kinds of partnerships with non-traditional partners. The Act also supports a different kind of pedagogy, i.e., learning in the context of the workplace.

With regard to integrating education, health, and social services, William Morrill emphasized that we need to begin with the recognition that children are part of families, families are part of communities, and that this vision should reflect an entirely different way of looking at school/community relationships. The focus must be on entire families and two-way communication between schools and families. John O'Looney observed that we need to look at families as whole systems with their own unique issues and strengths and connect them in ways that are humane and that establish long-term human relationships.

In his concluding perspectives on the symposium, Richard Grove discerned two distinctive positions that emerged. The first is that several participants spoke from a "top-down" perspective that embraces a process calling for various kinds of reform initiatives that begin with policy-driven activities. Conversely, several participants spoke from the "bottom-up" perspective that embraces a process calling for diversity of local restructuring initiatives that begins with community deliberation. This perspective could well be described as dialogue-driven. Each side undoubtedly had something important to say. As Grove noted, before choosing one side or the other, the real and often harsh realities of the rural world should not allow us to become so embroiled in our own arguments that nothing gets done.

E. Robert Stephens stressed policy implications for promoting the concept and noted that those implications are complex and challenging. Most observers seem to agree that although there currently is no unified federal policy for economic and community development in rural America, a need exists for an integrated and cohesive national policy, for a coordinating body with enforcement power to align new and exciting programs with the policy, and for reflecting the concept of rural school as a community learning and service center in both policy statements and program language. Stephens observed that the panelists repeatedly affirmed that promotion of the concept of schools as community learning and service centers, at a minimum, must be not only state-specific but sub-state and locally specific as well, must be incremental, and must focus on capacity building and resource development.

Robert Bhaerman revisited the interconnections between community development; economic development; family/school/community partnerships; school-to-work transition; and integrating educational, health, and social services. He viewed these components as a "chain" that binds rural schools and their communities. His guiding metaphor likened the program

design process to building a house, i.e., there clearly is no one way to redesign rural schools as community learning and service centers -- or to build a house. Both solid policy foundations and sound program guidelines are essential, since one can not impose a house from the "top-down." Bhaerman concluded by presenting a "blueprint" for designing schools as community learning and service centers and with the understanding that rural schools and communities must share common visions, build on strengths, make certain that solid foundations exist, overcome structural weaknesses, perform specific design tasks, and continually look for ways to improve the resulting effort through ongoing action research and program development.

PREFACE

This monograph, based on a symposium conducted by the rural education staff of Research for Better Schools (RBS) and supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., focuses primarily on the various perspectives of the symposium's participants. The information provided and the insights presented were rich and varied. Few ideas were left unchallenged. No attempt was made to constrain the dialogue and, indeed, a number of disparate issues were brought to the table. As one participant commented, "the price of consensus is a short list of generalities." We did not find consensus on every issue.

The monograph is organized in seven parts. Part One briefly describes the challenges facing rural schools and communities. Part Two describes the nature of the symposium, its purposes, and the questions addressed. Part Three presents a number of key assumptions and issues relating to community and economic foundations on which to design rural schools. Part Four focuses on the family/school/community partnership aspects of community learning centers, whereas Part Five focuses on the school-to-work aspects of community learning centers. Part Six discusses service integration as a dimension of community service centers. Part Seven presents the concluding perspectives of the three authors.

The purpose of the monograph is to identify major issues relating to broadening the rural schools' mission to serve as community learning and service centers. The audiences are school board members, teachers, and administrators, as well as relevant staff in health and human service agencies -- all of whom can play a valuable role in designing rural schools as community learning and service centers.

The authors are indebted to the Lilly Endowment, Inc. which provided financial support for the symposium and the participants who provided a variety of keen insights on these issues. Lastly, John Connolly, Deputy Director, and Dick Corbett, Co-director of Applied Research, at Research for Better Schools provided highly valuable reviews of the final draft.

I. RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUE RURAL CHALLENGES

The Congressionally-mandated study, The Condition of Education in Rural Schools (Stern, 1994) reports that large segments of the rural population are poorly educated, basic skills often are lacking, and illiteracy remains a major problem in many parts of the country. Hampered by the high costs of providing quality education in sparsely populated settings, rural schools and communities face major difficulties in elevating the knowledge and skill levels of their citizens. Moreover, rural communities have had a long history of losing their brightest students to urban and suburban areas. This "brain drain" is caused primarily by the combination of limited local educational opportunities and better employment prospects elsewhere.

At the same time that many rural communities are facing major economic and educational challenges, rural schools are being asked to respond to various federal and state mandates for systemic reform. These calls for change, in one way or another, seek to alter the rules, roles, relationships, and the ensuing outcomes for both students and teachers. Rural schools are being asked to reconfigure their mission, extend their roles, define new rules, and achieve better results. Although rural schools may very well be willing to rethink their mission and undertake additional roles and responsibilities, the question is, will they be able? Unfortunately, rural schools often lack the necessary financial, human, technical, and knowledge resources to engage in systemic reform.

The challenges for many rural schools who must "limp along" on their limited resource base are enormous. Redesigning these schools will tax even the most creative policymakers and policy advocates who, along with the state and local school and community leaders, must have a broad base of information and insights on which to frame their policies and, ultimately, their program decisions. If rural school personnel are to refocus their mission and respond to mandates for change, they will need a wide array of research-based knowledge and practical insights on which to make their decisions and select their options. The recommendations for educational reform must make sense if policymakers, policy advocates, and practitioners are to act intelligently, choose wisely, and assume meaningful roles in the change process.

The concept of systemic reform implies that a number of strategies are to be employed in order to impact the entire school system, e.g., policy reforms, participatory school governance, strategic change management, and enhanced curriculum -- along with learner-centered instruction and assessment and, most relevant to the issue on which we focus, the extended role of schools. Although each of these strategies must be addressed in order to achieve and maintain systemic reform, expanding the role of schools so that they serve as community leaning and service centers is central since it is based on the assumption that school and communities are inseparable -- so much so that it should be impossible to tell where the school door ends and the community door begins. As the America 2000 Sourcebook (U.S. Department of Education, 1991) affirms, "for schools to succeed, we must look beyond their classrooms to our communities...communities must become a place where learning can happen" (p.12). In some rural communities, this is a matter of life or death

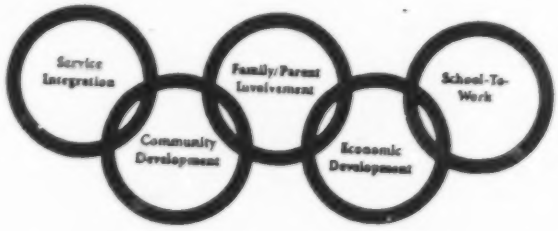
The conception of the rural school functioning as community learning and service center is based on the realizations that schools do not exist in a vacuum and that meeting the challenges facing rural schools requires the collaborative efforts of all sectors of the community. As Stephens (1991) noted several years ago, the concept of schools as learning and service centers has been at the core of the community school movement whose focus traditionally has centered on enhancing the quality of services to the community. It seemed clear to Stephens then -- as it does now to him and the rural education staff at Research for

Better Schools -- that a healthy rural school system functioning as a community learning and service center is a pre-condition for revitalizing both rural schools and communities.

II. FRAMING POLICY AND PROGRAM ISSUES

In an attempt to explore the relevant challenges and issues, Research for Better Schools -- with the support of the Lilly Endowment Inc. -- in 1994 conducted a two-day symposium, "Designing Rural Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers: Framing the Policy and Program Issues." The underlying concept of such schools implies a greatly broadened, more inclusive mission than now exists, namely, that schools should develop meaningful partnerships with the community, families and parents, health and social service agencies, and business/industry/labor organizations in order to deliver a variety of needed educational, work-related, and supportive services to children, youth, and adults.

The purpose of the syposium was to explore the various components that must be considered when designing rural schools in this fashion, namely, community development; economic development; family/school/community partnerships; school-to-work transition; and the integration of education, health, and social services. The linkages between these components were illustrated at the beginning of the symposium with the following adaptation of the "Olympic Rings" symbols:



The intent was to indicate that an "Olympian Task" is at hand. Nonetheless, our belief is that any mountain can be climbed if a sufficiently strong chain of interlocking partnerships are designed and implemented.

The participants in the symposium were:

Community development

Dr. Daryl Hobbs, Director, Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis, University of Missouri-Columbia

Dr. Paul Nachtigal, former Program Director, Rural Institute, Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory

Economic Development

Dr. David Mulkey, Professor, Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Florida

Dr. Jonathan Sher, Visiting Scholar, University of North Carolina

Family/School/Community Partnerships

Dr. Joyce Epstein, Co-director, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Lori Connors Tadros, Associate Research Scientist, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University

School-to-Work Transition

Dr. Morgan Lewis, Research Scientist, Center for Education and Training for Employment, The Ohio State University

Dr. Joan Wills, Director, Center for Workforce Development, Institute for Educational Leadership

Service Integration

Dr. William A. Morrill, Director, National Center for Service Integration

Dr. John O'Looney, Human Services Research Associate, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia.

In addition, Dr. E. Robert Stephens, Director of the Institute for Regional and Rural Studies in Education, served as general commentator for the symposium; Dr. Richard Grove of RBS served as facilitator; and Dr. Robert Bhaerman of RBS served as recorder.

Each participant was asked to respond to five questions:

1. What are the basic assumptions and key definitions in your particular area of focus?

2. What are the major problems (needs, barriers) that inhibit rural schools from operating effectively in this area?

3. What are the major strengths (capacities/facilitators) that enable rural schools to operate effectively in this area?

4. What design tasks must be accomplished in order to further the concept of schools functioning as community learning and service centers?

5. What additional research questions and development initiatives need to be pursued?

As one would expect, a substantial number of keen insights and affirmations were presented. Two of the most important ones were as follows. First, none of the participants challenged the basic assumptions that the rural school serving as a community learning and service center is a significant and innovative concept. Although cautions were raised, the fundamental notion was not refuted. Most of cautions -- which are, of course, important -- had more to do with implementation issues such as where one starts (top down or bottom up) and the nature and degree of the school's involvement and potential leadership roles. Second, the participants strongly affirmed that such schools cannot be designed -- or redesigned -- unless the communities in which the schools reside are themselves both viable and sustainable.

III. FORGING SOLID FOUNDATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

In this section, we review the participants' responses to the five questions regarding community and economic development issues.

Basic Assumptions and Definitions

There was general consensus (1) that one cannot try to fix rural problems with urban solutions and (2) that people need to attempt to create their own solutions. Nachtigal, in particular, criticized the approach of identifying problems and then trying "to find a fix," as well as the over-reliance on "technological fixes." He asserted that too often we tend to respond to problems rather than try to prevent them from arising, i.e., attending to "what's broken" rather than conducting more basic -- and preventative -- community development activities.

Other participants stressed the issue of rural diversity, noting that communities differ greatly in how they are structured for service delivery. Often there is a greater degree of commonality among urban areas regarding their problems, strategies, and hopes for the future than among rural communities. In addition, the participants appeared to agree with the assumption, noted by Stephens, that it is in the national interest that we attempt to develop a public policy response to the issues posed here and that the education policy community "pay attention to the status of rural schools, particularly with regard to their serving as community learning and service centers."

The basic question is this: Does the concept of designing rural schools along these lines make sense and, if so, what are the primary strengths and facilitators in rural schools and communities? Although there were varied views, the consensus was that if rural schools are to enhance their mission and broaden their roles, they must do so by remembering and acting on the ultimate goal, namely, meeting the multi-dimensional needs of children, youth, and their families.

With regard to the key definitions of relevant concepts, Hobbs' definition of community was highly insightful. In his view, "community" should not be seen as a particular place but rather as a set of relationships, i.e., people who live in proximity but who do not come together on issues are not a community. The concept also can be viewed as the ability or capacity to act jointly and effectively on one's own behalf. Moreover, a distinction must be made between development of communities (community development) and development in communities (economic development). Although we can create opportunities for community development, the question is whether or not we can sustain them over a period of time.

Speaking from an economic perspective, Mulkey stressed the need to think of community as a functional entity, i.e., an economic region. A community exists because it provides some set of services and because people choose to live there and take advantage of those services. Economic development should be viewed not only as growth but should be taken to mean the capacity to adjust to changing conditions. Evidence suggests that certain intangible factors (e.g., education, managerial, and leadership abilities) are critical to economic development. It is here that Mulkey saw a vital role for the rural schools in enhancing the capacity of the rural community.

Both Mulkey and Nachtigal introduced a related concept into the dialogue, namely, "bioregionalism." Mulkey observed that perhaps that term or the term "economic region" may be more appropriate than "community." Nachtigal suggested that "bioregionalism" connotes the creation of regionally appropriate means of living and livelihood and that its success will

depend on the degree to which its advocates can create workable economics, technologies, material resources, and education forms that are "rooted in a particular bioregion."

Problem Areas and Related Concerns

The following problem areas and related concerns were identified.

Inhibiting Factors -- Rural Schools

Several factors inhibit rural schools from expanding their mission: the relative lack of value given to education in rural areas; the seeming lack of awareness of feasible strategies to get the job started and make continuous progress; the gap between rhetoric and action, recognition of progress, and accountability; the need for leadership, formal structures for school improvement, and the necessary budgets to complete the task; and the already over-crowded agendas of rural schools. Perhaps the most relevant concern is the fundamentalism surrounding the schools' traditional mission, i.e., if the mission is solely to deliver the standardized curriculum to students, there may not be a receptive audience for innovations. Additional factors that inhibit schools from being involved in genuine community and economic development were: (1) the lack of imagination and the fear of change, (2) the lack of a mandate to be involved in these activities and the fear of reprisals, (3) the lack of knowledge and training and the fear of the unknown, (4) the lack of appropriate assistance and the fear of failure, and (3) the seeming lack of trust in students and teachers and the fear of failure.

Inhibiting Factors -- Rural Communities

Four factors that inhibit rural communities from greater involvement in community and economic development were noted: (1) diseconomies of scale and distance; (2) the weak base of human, institutional, and political resources; (3) the pre-existing integration into the state, national, and global economies, albeit on unfavorable terms; and (4) the fact that economic control is vested either outside the local community or concentrated in a small local elite.

The Schools' Relationship to Community and Economic Development

Four general problems were cited: (1) the lack of trained personnel for community and economic development activities (e.g., community outreach, community economics, and public finance); (2) the inconsistencies between school and/or state graduation requirements and types of activities needed to further promote economic development; (3) the fact that some schools operate in isolated rural areas with low population densities and narrowly specialized economies where there is little potential for expanded economic activity; and (4) the lack of effective linkages between schools and other agencies involved in education and/or community development (e.g., community colleges, cooperative extension agencies, health care organizations, other state/federal agencies, and private development groups).

Strengths of Rural Schools, Communities, and School/Community Relationships

The following ten strengths also were identified.

Schools and Teachers

Rural schools typically serve homogeneous student populations that generally exhibit good work habits; school staffs contain a concentration of college-trained individuals; and, perhaps most importantly, there is a relative lack of cynicism, jadedness, and hopelessness among students and teachers.

Lack of Bureaucracy

There is less bureaucratic "overburden" and, because of fewer administrative complexities, problems are more manageable. Because schools operate on a smaller scale in less bureaucratic environments, there are not the same obstacles to change in small rural systems as there are in larger non-rural ones.

Opportunity

Society has an historic opportunity to effect what the new goals are. If having rural schools as community learning and service centers makes sense, we may well be at the right moment to strive for that goal and have it happen on a fairly large scale.

Availability of Facilities

For many rural schools, the availability of facilities (computer labs, media centers, and recreational facilities) to support a variety of educational activities for both students and other community members is a strength.

Quality of Life

Rural areas are seen as desirable places to live, work, raise one's family, and retire. Moreover, an increasing number of economic activities can be located in places where people would prefer to live for quality-of-life reasons. An important advantage for rural economic development is that all jobs do not have to be centered in urban areas.

People Strengths

The strengths of rural communities are the family strengths, the common goals for the schools' success for students, and, to a great degree, the potential of many students who are curious, active, energetic, and motivated. Another strength is the work ethic and the identity of rural citizens as producers rather than consumers. Also, the relative stability of the rural population works to create long-term, interpersonal relations which, in turn, tend to promote the development of cooperative norms. In addition, the close relationships rural people traditionally have had with the land and the environment also is a positive factor.

Resources

The extensive natural resource base is a major strength. There also appears to be a "myth" that rural areas are devoid of capital. Several rural leaders in Missouri, for example, were reported to have asserted that the problem is not an absence of capital but rather that we are not allowing people to invest in their own communities.

Marginality

A strength of rural communities appears to be their very marginality, i.e., these communities largely operate away from the attention of government agencies and outside intervention.

Bridges to Educational and Economic Opportunities

Because of closer ties to the community and families, it should be a natural extension to focus instruction on the daily literacy tasks of children and parents and incorporate "bridges to education and economic opportunities." Also, institutional power-related issues may be less

rigid in rural schools because of their closer community ties. School staff and community agency staff may have a longer or deeper history of working together, or at least familiarity with each other; they may even occupy dual positions in the school and community. These strengths, coupled with the traditionally high levels of community involvement in their schools, make feasible the building of "bridges" in rural areas.

Connectiveness and Cohesiveness

A strength is either the reality or the legacy of the school/community connectiveness. The belief exists that schools and communities are supposed to be intimately connected. The school is supposed to be the heart of the community. This notion, even if partly myth, is worth building on. Another strength is the potential for cohesiveness between school and community goals; there is potential for less isolation in rural than in urban areas.

Design Tasks

The participants agreed that we need to (1) develop a process that will help rural residents assess their circumstances and begin to envision alternative scenarios for their community's future; (2) help them understand that they are not failures but perhaps victims of a political and economic system which concentrates power and wealth; (3) get them talking with each other across communities and regions and with urban people in their "bioregions" in order to build alliances and jointly sustain their communities; and (4) train school and community agency staff to support all of the expanded activities.

Several general tasks were suggested that should be conducted by students, teachers, and community members to further this agenda: (1) promoting economic understanding and analysis that is locally relevant, (2) connecting schools and economic development through entrepreneurships, (3) developing new mandates to do things themselves, and (4) providing an alternative vision of the quality of life, community economy, and the option for youth to stay in their communities. In turn, government and outside agencies should attempt to create the space and opportunities for these things to occur, provide their blessings and resources, and arrange enabling technical assistance.

The consensus was that these tasks are seen as a long-term, perhaps five-year agenda, and significant change likely will not occur with the rural schools' currently limited financial resources. Mulkey concluded that since "it is hard to make non-marginal changes, we need to take fairly small steps and begin to move in the right direction."

Research and Development Tasks

Four research and development activities were suggested. (1) A comprehensive review of state educational policies is needed to identify those policies that impede the schools' participation in economic development and those that enhance the schools' role in the process. (2) Research and development efforts should focus on the educational mission, the availability and use of facilities, personnel needs and training, curriculum revision, and identifying and expanding the schools' clientele. (3) Expanded research in human capital and economic development linkages is needed, as are improved ways to measure human capital and increased understanding of types of human capital investments and how they impact economic development. (4) Research and development questions need to be answered at the local level, i.e., how can research and development organizations serve a community agenda that may be contrary to the established political and economic agenda and that "takes on" the existing power structure?

In summary, the participants felt that "forging solid foundations" is only the beginning, albeit a necessary one. Everyone agreed that rural schools cannot be designed -- or redesigned -- unless the communities in which the schools exist are both viable and sustainable.

IV. DEVELOPING FAMILY/SCHOOL/COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In this section, we review the participants' responses to the five questions regarding family/school/community partnerships.

Basic Concepts and Programs

Two basic concepts were described -- overlapping spheres of influence and six types of partnerships -- as well as several other relevant programs.

Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Epstein presented an idea that is fundamental to designing schools as community learning centers: the concept of overlapping spheres of influence, a model for understanding and developing school and family relationships. The model is seen as spheres that by design can be "pushed together or pulled apart" by practices and interpersonal forces in each environment. The extent of overlap is affected by time (to account for change in the students' ages and grade levels and the influences of changes in environments) and by behavior (to account for the background characteristics, philosophies, and practices of each environment.) Interactions may occur either at an institutional level (schools inviting all of the students' families to events or sending the same communications to all the students' families) or a personal level (parents and teachers conferring, and assisting a child's progress.)

Epstein emphasized that families, schools, and communities need to share appropriate responsibilities for student learning and development. Students are more likely to define themselves as "students" if they receive common messages from the school, family, and community about the importance of learning and staying in school. She also indicated that we use the overlapping spheres of influence model to show that schools, families, and communities can be "pushed together or pulled apart" by their partnership practices at each grade level. In most schools, there is greater overlap in the earlier grades and less overlap of school, family, and community as students move through the grades. However, these patterns can be changed if schools develop strong programs of partnership with appropriate connections with families at each grade level.

Epstein also emphasized the importance of family/school/community partnerships as a more comprehensive approach than simply "parent involvement." Partners must seek the same goals for students and make important investments in the students' development. Partnerships are "strength rather than deficit models" since important information is shared among partners rather than simply making demands on parents. She also spoke of the centrality of the role of students in such partnerships. For example, many people speak of "parent involvement" or "parent-teacher connections" and leave the students out. "This seems like a conspiracy because it is the students who are the learners and who must understand their work in school. They have to be part of the connections that are formed by families, schools, and communities. Students are central."

Six Types of Partnerships

Epstein also distinguished six types of family/school/community partnerships that are highly relevant to designing schools as community learning and service centers. Each type leads to different outcomes for students and has different challenges to overcome in order to have an excellent program. Together, the six types form a framework for how any school -- rural, urban, or suburban -- can develop comprehensive and appropriate programs.

The six types are as follows. (1) Basic obligations of families. Families need to attend to the health, nutritional, safety, food, clothing, housing, and caring needs of their children; they also need to establish a home environment to support their children's needs as students. Schools can help families with these roles, particularly by providing good information about child and adolescent development. (2) Basic obligations of schools. Schools are responsible for communicating to all families information about school programs and students' progress through conferences, report cards, and similar types of communications. They also are responsible for how families learn about these things and how well they understand them. (3) Involvement at school. Family members and other volunteers can assist schools, attend school events, or support children and youth in a variety of ways. (4) Involvement in learning activities at home. Epstein and her colleagues have developed an interactive homework process called "Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork" (TIPS) that requires children to talk to someone at home about something interesting they are learning in school. This is one type of activity that involves all families in learning activities at home without requiring parents to teach children school subjects. Instead, the children develop oral histories from parents and other family or community members. (5) Parent involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy. This type of partnership includes parent participation on school-site councils and school-based management teams. Schools need to review who serves as representatives on decision making committees and how all groups of families are represented. (6) Schools collaborations with the community. This type of partnership includes various connections with individuals, organizations, and agencies in communities. Priorities may focus on how communities assist schools and how schools, children, and families assist the community.

Epstein and her colleagues do not "rank order" the six types. Each is important and each leads to different outcomes for students, parents, schools, and communities. One of the major misconceptions is that any practice to involve families will lead to higher student achievement. Rather, different practices will produce different results. For example, the one type that has a chance in the short term to improve student skills in the elementary schools is probably Type 4, which involves families directly in conversations with their children about homework and school subjects. If students practice spelling words with a family member at home, the chances are they will do better on the test. Schools also need to get away from the "body count mentality" as a means of determining effective family involvement. Some activities to involve families in their children's education occur at school, whereas others occur at home or in the community. Teachers, therefore, must begin to think about creative ways of doing business in order to implement their visions of community learning centers. [Note. For a detailed description of the six types of partnerships, see Epstein, 1992 and 1995.]

Intergenerational Family Literacy and other Family-focused Programs

Intergenerational family literacy programs -- one example of sharing community responsibility in designing rural schools as community learning centers -- address parents' and children's literacy needs and directly attempt to help adults/parents support children's learning. Such programs typically offer adult education, preschool or school-age services, and parent-child activities and services. The intent is to develop a positive family environment for supporting children's development beyond particular strategies that adults use in parenting, including various types of educational and economic opportunities found in adult education and job training programs.

Tadros posed those questions: What is the purpose of literacy development? Is it only for cognitive achievement or is it for developing a whole person who participates in society? In response, she defined family literacy in terms of educational opportunities for adults who missed that opportunity "the first time around" and did not graduate from high school or who need economic or job-related training. She noted that a need exists in rural communities to consider the "literacy demands" made on community members, based on the specific literacy

tasks required to function effectively in a specific locale. She also indicated that family-focused programs address adults' and/or children's development concerns and learning needs but programmatically do not attempt to directly influence the transmission of adult skills to children. Although such programs typically offer services to parents only or children only, they may indirectly address family and parent needs and issues. In rural communities, there is a place for both family-focused programs serving the broad needs of family members' social, developmental, and health-related concerns. Such programs might serve as resource, information, or referral centers, or coordinate and collaborate with varied providers to deliver multiple services in one location.

Tadros further noted that as schools and communities increasingly are called on to collaborate in delivering services to children and families in either family-focused or intergenerational programs, it is useful to consider two types of collaborations: school-linked and family-support services. The former attempt to increase the number of resources available to children and families and to make access universal to all families rather than just the most needy. Such interventions focus on delivering comprehensive services primarily to the child. Family-support services share with school-linked services the goal of increasing the number of resources available to families and the breadth of access by all families. They differ, however, in that such services generally emanate from community and grassroots organizations, normally have not had to contend with institutional power-related issues, and typically place primary importance on the family as a unit and, therefore, address a broad range of human needs. The types of collaboration engaged in by each community generally are determined by the needs of participants, the history and structure of collaboration in the community, and funding sources.

Problem Areas and Related Concerns

Several problems that inhibit rural and other schools from developing comprehensive partnership programs include a lack of teacher and administrator education in understanding the concept of overlapping spheres of influence and the framework of six types of involvement. Educators need to see that improving partnerships with families is part of a full program for improving schools.

Although many students and their families in rural and other areas have high aspirations, many teachers neither know about these "dreams" nor assist students in attaining them. Families also often are unaware of the school's policies or programs that could help their children succeed as students. In many cases, Epstein noted, we have not put "all the pieces of children's lives together very well." In rural areas, schools often are a distance from the families, making it imperative to work in new ways with new technologies and varied time schedules so that families can work with their children at home as well as at various times in the school. The reality is that it takes an incredible amount of perseverance, persistence, and people to organize and maintain partnerships in which schools, families, and communities share responsibilities and resources. A timeline of five to ten years may be needed to develop comprehensive partnerships that address the multiple needs of families.

Strengths of Rural Family/School/Community Relationships

In spite of these concerns, rural schools have the capacity to develop strong and responsive partnership programs. For example, Epstein emphasized that "rural strengths are family strengths," as are the common goals of families and schools for student success and the potential and talents of students. She affirmed that the students generally are curious, active, energetic, lively, and interesting.

Tadros also observed that rural schools may be better able to identify which children and families need literacy-related skills and, therefore, help them access appropriate services because of the staff's knowledge of the community. Hence, rural schools can play a vital role in energizing appropriate school and community groups to collaborate in securing resources for family literacy programs, e.g., Even Start.

Design Tasks

Several tasks were identified to increase the likelihood that rural schools will strengthen partnerships with families and their communities.

Enhancing Partnerships

A highly supportive set of strategies will be needed in order to move from rhetoric to action, according to Epstein. State, district, and school building leadership must take an "enabling approach" to partnerships with policies, staff facilitation, and budgets that permit schools to develop programs over time. Also, there must be connections between plans for partnership and accountability for accomplishments. Although school programs must be developed by each school, guidance and follow up from district leaders also is most important. Since many rural districts include only a few schools, the task of helping each school create programs with six types of involvement is clearly attainable.

Mobilizing and Sharing Resources

Four ways were suggested for rural schools to mobilize resources to implement effective intergenerational literacy and/or family-focused programs through school-community collaboration: (1) human resources -- school and community staff should share their expertise and assume responsibility for specific roles, e.g., community organizations could provide or hire an adult literacy teacher and the school staff could provide or hire the children's teacher; (2) financial resources -- either the school or community organization staff should take the lead in co-writing grant proposals; they should share resources (material or cash) or in-kind donations (e.g., space, donation of a portion of staff-time, materials, and staff training); (3) technical resources -- school-based family literacy staff should attend training sessions conducted by the literacy provider and vice-versa; sometimes community organizations have access to transportation, e.g., Head Start programs often have vans that could be used by family literacy programs; and (4) knowledge resources -- the extensive knowledge of children and families should be helpful in recruiting appropriate families, maintaining participation, and designing appropriate goals. These efforts should result in better access and availability of appropriate support services. However, the efforts will need to address how the staff can be kept aware of the burgeoning knowledge in the field of family literacy.

Tadros also suggested that mobilizing and sharing resources should be enhanced by broad regional and/or county planning. With respect to family literacy programs, rural schools -- in collaboration with literacy providers -- need to address issues relating to the content of instruction, the number of hours of instruction, and the methods of assessing change, as well as the issues of accessibility, transportation, and child care.

Establishing Action Teams

Epstein has introduced the structure of action teams for family/school/community partnerships that she and her colleagues are developing with schools. She noted that often school improvement teams may have a sizable agenda but "not have much action." Also, since there are no guarantees that partnerships will be given due attention, an Action Team is

needed to assure that teachers, administrators, and parents take responsibility for implementing programs for the six types of involvement over a period of three to five years.

Epstein explained that the practices selected for each type of involvement and how they go about implementing their plan is up to the teams. The framework, however, helps teams keep track of where they are starting from, what they want to improve or add, and whether progress is made from year to year. If one person moves or is promoted, the work of the team will continue. Also, the Action Team assures that parents' views and leadership are part of the process of developing partnerships. In short, the team provides a structure for conducting work on the topic of the partnership or other topics on a schools' improvement agenda. She also indicated that a serious gap exists in budgets for this type of work, i.e., people think programs to involve families are cost free. There are, however, costs associated with employing a facilitator to "keep Action Teams on the path of their improvement agenda." Nonetheless, it should be possible to reallocate existing funds to support the staff and the work of each team. The framework of the six types of partnership can help schools coordinate all of their connections with families and plan to improve their programs over time.

Developing Collaborations

Three tasks for developing successful collaborations are: (1) planning together e.g., to build awareness of other institution's needs and interests, a parent-community specialist can help develop programs; (2) sharing responsibilities, e.g., developing curriculum, training staff, securing space and resources at the school, and identifying school and community resources for referring participants to the program and for meeting their personal and family needs; and (3) developing program visibility and awareness. We also must not overlook the need for both initial training and re-training to meet the needs of family and community development.

Establishing Homework Centers

Homework centers can be useful if, in addition to giving students a place to do their work, they enable parents to learn more about what their children are learning. Such centers can be staffed by volunteers and may include high school or community college students or older citizens. Epstein indicated that this activity is a positive attempt at "building community."

Research and Development Tasks

Epstein suggested three research questions. (1) How do states, districts, and schools address difficulties in family/school/community partnerships in rural areas associated with families' distance from schools? (2) How can rural districts help their elementary, middle, and high schools implement comprehensive programs of family/school/community partnerships that include the six types of involvement? (3) What is common and what is different about partnerships in rural and other schools?

Tadros added three questions on family literacy. (1) What is the nature of family literacy programs in rural communities? (2) What are the similarities and differences in service delivery goals, program components, and program outcomes across rural programs and between rural and urban programs? (3) How do family literacy programs in rural communities address problems in obtaining human, financial, technical, and knowledge resources? (4) What strategies can garner new or additional resources and/or strengthen the effectiveness of existing resources? (5) How do school-linked services and family support services work best in rural communities?

V. DEVELOPING SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION PROGRAMS

In this section, we review the participants' responses to the five questions with regard to school-to-work transition.

School-to-Work Transition Concepts

Lewis described the components of a comprehensive school-to-work strategy that the General Accounting Office (1993) has identified: processes for developing academic and occupational competencies, career education and development activities, extensive linkages between school systems and employers, and meaningful work experiences. He also presented the following four observations regarding school-to-work transition. (1) School-to-work transition is a process, not a single occurrence, that begins well before students formally leave school. Often there is concurrent involvement in both education and employment and more than one movement from one sector to another. (2) Our society's commitment to equal opportunity, regardless of social origin, makes us reluctant to develop definitive career paths that may limit future opportunities. (3) Young people need sustained labor market experience for their occupational interests and aspirations to crystallize into realistic goals. (4) Employers with preferred jobs have considerable choice among applicants for their openings and typically do not hire and train workers who are a few years out of high school.

Both Lewis and Wills reflected on transitional problems in general and in rural areas in particular. For example, Lewis commented on the difficulties many young people have that are due, in part, to their limited career maturity when they leave public school. Often this results in high rates of occupational mobility during their first few years out of high school. The consequence is the reluctance on the part of career-type employers to hire young people until they have moved through the exploratory period of their occupational development, are more stabilized, and have begun to establish themselves in specific occupations. The problem often is exacerbated for poor and rural youth who have less opportunity to develop skills needed to acquire good jobs with opportunities for promotion.

Wills observed that school-to-work transition should not necessarily be centered "at the high end of the school," that greater articulation is needed both within and beyond the high school level, that we need to find better ways to connect young people to the world of work, and, lastly, that the current educational and training structures have not been adequate to meet the perceived international economic pressures. She noted that although may people thought education was going to be able to solve our competitiveness problems in the international marketplace, "that is an enormous burden to put on the educational system." She also indicates that the current educational and training system has not served everyone well since many youth have lost their sense of belonging and focus.

Wills emphasized the opportunity for educators to think anew about these issues since the School-to-Work Opportunities Act focuses on issues in a different kind of way and is the first piece of legislation at the national level in the last 25 to 30 years that can be conceived as building the needed infrastructure. The Act's intent goes beyond providing direct program services but instead focuses on helping to build capacity across institutions and to create new institutions. The Act also is the first piece of federal legislation that says we have to begin to create different kinds of partnerships with essentially "unnatural, non-traditional partners." Moreover, this is the first time we have said that we need to consider a different kind of pedagogy for a substantial portion of our high school students. She added, however, that it will take considerable time before we can create "an American-style system."

What has emerged out of this is the realization that we do not need another new program but rather a better way to redirect current resources and change the way we teach a

large portion of our high school students so that we provide them with opportunities "to learn in context." Learning in context, Wills explained, means a requirement that part of the students' learning should occur in the workplace. She noted that work-based learning is modeled after lessons learned from our European counterparts who have developed structures that engage employers in assisting with the development, design, and delivery of the curriculum. Also, these countries recognize in different ways that occupational preparation is training of the workforce, part of economic development, and a strategy for social policy. The school-to-work legislation is an attempt, therefore, not to dictate what new programs need but rather to provide opportunities for experimentation. Although these opportunities would be driven at the state government level, the question is whether or not they will be conducted "school district by school district or in a regional economic structure."

Wills maintained that we need to learn how to change the "pedagogy of teaching and instruction" so that it will include a substantial part of the students time spent in the workplace. There have been a few demonstration projects during the past five years that have suggested that there is value in work-based learning for young people as well as for employers. However, it is unclear whether or not we will have sufficient financial resources since youth apprenticeship demonstration projects are very costly. Therefore, we are going to have to "sort out different ways" of developing learning opportunities and engaging those who have never seriously come together or have done so only marginally. Wills concluded that trying to use the community as a way to organize schooling in a manner that engages young people and the community continues to be "a quest and not a reality."

Lastly, Nachtigal observed that there is a growing acceptance of the need to make learning more effective and to involve students in meaningful community issues, i.e., to use the community as a learning laboratory. We need to convince people that it is legitimate to have students out of the classroom from time to time and involved in "real" learning experiences. That is not easy, since we are "getting messages to do something else," e.g., the agendas of the national goals and national standards seem to be moving in another direction.

Problems with Rural School-to-Work Transition

Several problems areas noted were, the limited access to postsecondary education and training, limited opportunities for school-supervised work experiences and permanent employment in desirable jobs, minimal vocational guidance for students and little knowledge of the range of the possible occupations, and the limited number of school staff who have had experience with school-based enterprises. Lewis was concerned that rural schools staff are spread very thinly and have to perform many school-to-work functions for which they may have little preparation.

Several other problem areas included the limited capacity for students to be exposed to occupational areas or choices, the relatively weak career information system for students, the underlying economic infrastructure of the community, and the marginal ability of communities to engage the private sector. Wills cautioned that the leadership representing the employer community in rural areas presents a serious challenge. Other problem areas include the relatively limited breadth of the labor market, the low wage base, and the limited base for career progression. Wills also noted the generally weak conceptualization of pedagogy and learning in context and suggested that this can be particularly problematic in rural areas, along with the problem of doing away with the general education track. In addition, O'Looney acknowledged the high rate at which young adults who are reared in rural areas leave in order to obtain jobs elsewhere. Such rural places often are unable to reap the economic benefits of their investments in their children's education.

Strengths of Rural School-to-Work Transition

Lewis, who reiterated the strengths of rural communities regarding the seemingly high level of local interest and involvement, called attention to the consensus opinion that work habits tend to be stronger in rural areas. Wills reaffirmed the strong work ethic, underscoring that rural economic development programs have been built on the strategy of a strong sense of work. Other strengths cited were the potential that the cooperative extension system holds for an expanded school-to-work transition system and the linkages between vocational education and such student organizations as the Future Farmers of America.

Design Tasks

The following three broad design tasks were noted.

School-based Enterprises and Entrepreneurial Education

Asserting that school-based enterprises are a natural match for community and economic development, Lewis suggested that, where conditions are favorable, rural educators must identify unmet needs for potential services, secure local support for school-based enterprises, and provide professional development for staff who will administer the programs. Hobbs noted that entrepreneurial activity has the potential of producing the economic development that often is needed in rural communities. However, merely focusing on skill development is insufficient. Referring to the common activity of engaging students in building homes, Hobbs stipulated that this activity in and of itself is not a complete school-based enterprise since it is mainly focused on skills rather than on all of the steps needed to become a contractor. Therefore, rural schools that engage in such activities should make certain that the entire scope of small business enterprises are understood by students.

Sher spoke at some length about various aspects of the Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Leaning (REAL) program and its relevance to designing rural schools as community learning centers. REAL, a program about entrepreneurial education at both the high school and community college level, is distinguished by several factors that go beyond such typical activities as students operating a school store or the more sophisticated example noted above, i.e., building houses. Although those are excellent programs, they may have little to do with entrepreneurships even though economic activities are involved. Students do not necessarily learn about the community's economy or the construction industry since they focus mainly on manual skills. REAL enterprises also should not be confused with such programs as Junior Achievement whose focus essentially is on learning about free enterprise. Such programs are mainly simulations in that they start up, operate for a time, and then close.

The basic idea of REAL is helping students learn how to be job creators and plan and operate businesses which -- after the students graduate -- become community enterprises. This approach is about a new way of teaching, i.e., through action and reflection. It also is a good example of connecting schools and communities as well as classroom work and real-world work and teaching students responsibility for their behavior beyond the classroom.

Another important point is that participants in the REAL approach function as job creators rather than employees. According to Sher, REAL's initial rationale was to provide alternatives for students who are not going to college since they see different possibilities for themselves. The initial idea was that high school students would remain in the community and run long-term businesses. Although this may not be occurring to a large degree, many students now see themselves having greater direction and capacity to succeed. Sher also discussed the issue of community context, i.e., the REAL enterprise approach is a meaningful way of connecting schools and communities. Since adults are heavily involved in planning,

supervising, and implementing programs, students are involved in the community and are able to learn about the local economy. Moreover, even students who do not start their own businesses often become better employees since they learn how businesses operate. This approach requires people to go beyond rhetorical agreements and attempt to fundamentally change school/community partnerships as well as curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

A Combination of Initiatives

Wills suggested five broad initiatives. (1) Articulation is needed between school-based and work-based experiences, i.e., there must be a plan based on learnings that have taken place in the workplace and that relate to what is taking place in the classroom. (2) Definition of skill standards in large occupational areas is necessary. These voluntary standards would be used as a basis for designing occupational-specific curriculum; recruiting, hiring, and promoting; and developing third-party assessments of an individual's skills and knowledge. We would then create new forms of credentials that would be recognized as portable across occupations, industries, and regions. (3) Tech prep -- an attempt to establish articulation between secondary and postsecondary schools -- is, or should be, part of the effort. (4) We need to permit local communities to come together "to create a different form of governance; call it a community charter for lack of a better word." People would come together at the local level and begin to take control of the decision-making process, using the current political governance systems. In short, school-to-work initiatives cannot be viewed simply as another independent set of actions but have to be tied to a community coming together, agreeing on goals, and creating indicators of how they are going to achieve the goals. (5) Other needed efforts include rethinking staff development and the composition of the teaching staff, expanding options for youth, and creating partnerships with "the good housekeeping seal of approval" in terms of program quality. Lastly, stressing the need for leadership, visioning, and human capacity, Wills concluded that the only thing stopping us from doing this correctly is our imagination and energy.

Career Awareness and Career Education

Lewis recommended expanding and, where necessary, initiating programs to increase career awareness and occupational guidance for rural youth. Although the career education demonstration efforts in the late 1960s and early to mid-1970s appeared to have had little impact, the infusion of career education into the curriculum "still is a critical need," as is how we develop an acceptance of it by both parents and teachers. In spite of the overall lack of impact, the positive evaluations of career education indicated student gains in terms of increased occupational knowledge, positive attitudes toward work, understanding the relevance of what they were studying and what tasks they were performing in the workplace, and -- in some cases -- enhanced occupational skills. Lewis suggested expanding and/or initiating "second chance programs" so that people can have another opportunity to try to achieve what they are capable of achieving. In short, we need to capitalize on the nature of the career development process that has various stages at which people define an interest and career area and progressively develop it to the extent they are able.

Research and Development Tasks

Four research questions dealt with school-based enterprises. (1) What are the common features of successful rural school-based enterprises? (2) What type of preparation do rural school staff need to develop school-based enterprises? (3) Are students who work in school-based enterprises more successful in making the school-to-work transition compared to students who do not work in them? (4) What is the survival rate of rural school-based enterprises? Several additional needed research areas dealt with the need for process evaluations regarding how school-to-work strategies are effectively implemented in rural areas,

learning processes in school-to-work transition, leadership relationships, and comparative analyses of school-to-work transition implementation in rural and urban areas.

Lastly, two related development activities were recommended: developing networks of active school-based enterprises that can provide advice and assistance to rural schools that wish to start their own enterprises, and further developing and expanding REAL enterprises.

VI. DEVELOPING INTEGRATED SERVICES INITIATIVES

In this section, we review the participants' responses to the five questions regarding integrating educational, health, and social services.

Basic Concepts and Underlying Assumptions

The following basic concepts and underlying assumptions were presented.

Basic Concepts

O'Looney distinguished between what he termed "soft" or informal elements of collaboration, i.e., sharing goals and experiencing joint activities, and "hard" or formal elements of collaboration, i.e., integrating services. Integration can occur at four levels: (1) service delivery-centered -- realignment and flexibility of professional roles; (2) program-centered -- shared information systems, co-location, and joint program planning; (3) policy-centered -- capacity building, conducting need assessments, setting priorities, solving problems, refinancing, and decategorizing funding stream; and (4) organizational-centered -- reorganizing structures to support the previous items.

O'Looney also outlined four principles for redirecting resources to further service integration. (1) Early intervention/prevention suggests that a substantial amount of resources currently directed to children and families in crisis might be better targeted toward similar sets of children and families prior to falling into crisis, and that there exists a fairly high level of knowledge of predictive risk factors and a community's ability to identify children and families who experience these risks. (2) Family-centered and family-driven service delivery includes all family members in assessment, coordination, treatment, and monitoring; is based on the goals the family set for itself; is sensitive to unique family needs, schedules, resources, values, and racial and cultural contexts; and provides for meaningful family participation in setting policies, allocating resources, and operating programs. (3) Community-based refers to deploying resources in a manner that considers, maintains, supports, and expands existing strengths and community resources, including informal helping networks, civic and neighborhood associations, advocacy groups, and ethnic and cultural identities. (4) Cultural sensitivity refers to the manner in which service personnel are recruited and trained and policies and programs are implemented, especially ones that provide children and adults opportunities to experience pride in their heritage and a sense of belonging.

Underlying Assumptions

Sher spoke of the importance of the assumptions one makes and observed that the symposium appeared to be based on the assumption that children will be the primary beneficiaries of integrated services. A great deal of discussion centered on his observation that this conclusion is not self evident. For example, at the outset, Bhaerman noted that service integration often has been described as an attempt to provide a "seamless web" of services for children, youth, and their families. Sher responded that although this is a powerful metaphor, it is not clear who the spider is and who should spin the web and to what end. He elaborated on this point by noting that the symposium's planners assume that service integration is beneficial. To Sher, this too is not self evident -- and may not even be possible. He pointed out that we may be falling into the trap that since something must be done, and that since this is something, this must be done. Although he agreed that something must be done, integrating services may not be the proper solution since it often is advocated as an end rather than as a means to an end. Sher observed that the benefits often become global and ill-defined. He pointed out that often we do not consider the truly significant problems that need to be

addressed, e.g., if there is a problem in rural communities of children not being immunized against disease, it is not difficult to simply establish an immunization program rather than go through a comprehensive process of integrating services. According to Sher, the notion that children need immunization shots somehow gets lost in a bureaucratic maze. Morrill also noted the difficulty of trying to make complex change in major bureaucratic organizations that often have trouble operating on their own.

Nonetheless, Sher confirmed that there is hope of service integration being useful to the extent that it is based on and acts in accordance with fundamental respect for rural people and communities. These people should not be viewed merely as clients with problems that need to be fixed by professional delivery services. With that fundamental respect, the concept of integration does have some hope of producing useful results. Without respect, however, one cannot expect it to succeed. The great danger may come from trivializing good ideas and good intentions. There is hope, however, if the focus remains centered on making a difference for the better in the lives of rural children and their families. The bottom line is, and ought to be, how the initiative would best serve children and their families.

Epstein stated that she assumes that service integration is possible and, if well implemented, is a good thing. However, we need to know a great deal more about the differences and similarities of rural, urban, and suburban locations and how integrated services actually help children and youth. She suggested that we need to direct our attention on how to get ideas into action and how to study the nature and effects of alternative ways to organize collaborations among agencies.

The consensus was clear that families are -- or should be -- the focus. Morrill acknowledged that we need to begin with the recognition that children are part of families and families are part of communities and that we have to engage all levels of the governing system from families and communities on up. O'Looney indicated that we need to look at families as individuals, whole systems with unique issues and strengths, and connect them in ways that are humane and caring and that establish long-term human relationships. Epstein also noted the need to establish two-way communication between schools and families in order to create true partnerships. Tadros pointed out that the basic purpose of school-linked service integration is to increase families' access to resources as well as the number of resources that apply to the needs of children and families. Morrill asserted that schools and communities need to establish a common vision of where they want to go, and that the vision should reflect "a different set of relationships to communities." The bottom line should be that children and families are better off than when they started.

There also was a good deal of agreement on resources. Morrill noted that we live in a "resource-constrained world" where more dollars are not going to "appear on trees" and where we have to figure out how we are going to "get more mileage" out of what we have. To this end, O'Looney observed that, in developing a system of integrated services in rural schools, we need to be clear about resources. If, for example, resources were unlimited, it would be feasible to have a fully integrated, preventive, family-focused system without having to be concerned with how to transfer resources from one area to another. He commented that although resources obviously are necessary, they alone are insufficient for communities to show progress toward a new system of community services. Both local resources and long-term commitment are necessary. O'Looney made the following points: (1) Existence of resources -- It is assumed that communities entering into initiatives will make available in-kind or other resources of equivalent or greater amount. (2) Demonstration pilots -- Use of outside "glue" money for pilots likely will be limited. (3) Service integration -- At least half of the "glue" money will likely be available for intermediate-term service integration efforts that affect the core operations of mainline agencies. (4) Length and expected impact -- Parties entering into a collaborative

should commit to operating a reconfigured service system for at least three years after the "glue" money had been distributed.

Problems with Service Integration in Rural Areas

O'Looney suggested that because many communities feel "overwhelmed by the whole task," they continue to do what they have done rather than confront difficult choices. He elaborated on several relevant problems.

Higher Level of Stigma

When compared to urban areas, a higher level of stigma is evident in receiving services in rural communities. Because rural areas are characterized by people generally knowing each other and by placing high value on self-reliance (with respect to public assistance), a person's reputation can be jeopardized when he or she accepts such assistance. Rather than being seen as part of the vicissitudes of life, the need to ask for governmental assistance may be seen as a sign of personal failure. While admirable, this behavior can inhibit the ability of the system to get help where it is needed.

Cultural Separation

The separation between the "educated" school staff and the "non-educated" population tends to be severe in some rural areas. In these areas, the educated class tends to be somewhat elite. This separation can reduce the chances that program managers will view non-formally-educated persons as resources or will be able to bridge the cultural gap that prevents using these people as resources.

Political Climate and Social Norms

School-linked services that include counseling or health education components that involve topics of sexual behavior or reproductive health can be anathema to some individuals. However, while the typical rural environment is conservative, it usually is pragmatic i.e., some individuals would not object to children learning practical skills beyond the "3Rs.") Without properly preparing the groundwork for such services, pragmatic conservatives cannot be persuaded that schools have any business doing anything beyond academics even if it can be proven that these "extras" contribute to enhanced academic performance.

Lack of Perception that Formal Relationships are Needed

For the most part, businesses in rural areas sometimes tend to be conducted without written agreements, i.e., program directors relatively higher level of acquaintance with others often will be enough to secure support for collaboration. However, the same factor -- strong informal networks -- can work against such efforts when circumstances change, e.g., when a district gets a new superintendent. Relationships between schools and service agencies developed by the former superintendent can weaken or collapse if it were based on personality rather than on formal understandings.

In addition, O'Looney identified several other potential problem areas: (1) the existence of "rural ghettos" of unemployed, low-income, elderly residents where support for services above the basic level is minimal; (2) the lack of neighborhoods, i.e., family-centered, community-based services may not be fully realizable when travel distances are too great; (3) the lower level of professional education and continued professional development, i.e., service integration may require higher levels of administrative and technical skills and addition of staff with information technology expertise; (4) community leaders failure to see connections

between the presence of social problems and the delivery of needed services; and (5) rural areas tend to be less consistently and less fully linked with key personnel in state-level agencies and, hence, less likely to know about state preferences or integration strategies. In addition, rural communities sometimes are disadvantaged by the "ad hoc" approach to allocating resources for prevention activities. This is the case because formal and informal standards for adequate crisis intervention and tertiary care usually are set by the more resource-rich urban communities. When rural communities attempt to meet the standards, they sometimes can be forced into near bankruptcy. In providing tertiary care that is up to the level of urban standards, rural communities may have to abandon the prevention services.

Strengths of Service Integration in Rural Areas

The following five strengths were identified.

Advantages of Backwardness

O'Looney contended that rural areas may have what he called the "advantage of backwardness," i.e., they may be able to "leapfrog" the current generation of information technology and invest in the next generation that effectively uses the skills of generalists rather than specialists. The advantages are that communities do not need to confront the costs of the earlier technologies and can decide to purchase the more flexible second generation technologies, and that rural areas tend to have more generalist service personnel.

Communication Linkages

O'Looney observed that as radio, TV, and other communication links penetrate remote areas and as there has been somewhat of a return migration from urban to rural areas, the so-called "idiocy of rural life" has been reduced substantially if not eliminated entirely. The awareness of new programs and the willingness to adopt innovations seemingly is not substantially different in rural than in urban areas.

Service System Stakeholders

The fewer number of stakeholders who must be brought into a collaborative reduces the complexity of the task and often results in closer communication between administrators and direct-service personnel. Strong communication links tend to keep administrators close to the data about family well-being and how the system may be placing barriers in the way of family development. Fewer providers often results in their having detailed knowledge of each other's clients. Hence, collaborative case conferencing is easier to coordinate; is less wasteful of staff time since the same group of people generally work with common cases; and is more likely to have synergistic effects over time as staff get to know the families, neighbors, and relatives who might present cross-generational, cross-service-area problems.

Potential Natural Helpers

Formal labor force participation rates among men and especially women generally are lower in rural areas. While low rates can be seen as a problem from a feminist view, these rates also can be seen as an opportunity for service providers to engage non-working men and women in development activities on a volunteer or paid basis. The number of potential natural helpers in rural areas is high. While many people may not have high levels of formal education, they can be employed in such important activities as home visiting with new mothers, infant stimulation, and early childhood education.

Openness to Innovation

Despite the penetration of communication links and associated values, O'Looney suggested that rural residents still tend to be strongly oriented to their communities and, hence, may be willing to engage in activities that do not have an "immediate, monetary exchange value." It may be easier for them to build community capacity in innovative, informal ways than would suburban and urban residents.

Design Tasks

Both general and specific suggestions were presented. For example, Morrill called attention to the fact that although collaborations are complicated and that one has to deal with a variety of divergent funding streams and governance approaches, a "set of substantial experiments" are needed to "test out" a variety of theories. Since there is "no single, uniform answer" and since there are many concerns relating to family focus, target audiences, and communication mechanisms, it will take considerable time to sort out options, develop programs, and study their effects. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that many ongoing collaborative efforts exist, that more flexibility regarding waivers exists "than anybody is prepared to admit," and that the climate for change and windows of opportunity are now present. Six additional design tasks are noted below.

Developing Facilitative Mechanisms

According to O'Looney, facilitative mechanisms include: (1) technical assistance in refinancing initiatives; (2) technical assistance in planning, group facilitation, and conflict resolution; (3) job descriptions and performance review formats that include performance criteria related to service integration; (4) means whereby staff can be employed by a collaborative but can maintain their status, benefits, and retirement plans as part of their employment by a traditional agency; (5) links to peers who are attempting to integrate services in other communities; (6) links to "sympathetic gadflies" such as university researchers, foundation program managers, and regional planners who provide a sympathetic ear for those involved in the process and an objective eye on the process itself; and (7) long-term capital planning that includes designs for the next generation of schools that serve as community/family centers.

Acquiring Better Assessment Tools

Most local assessments provide a general overview of resources, gaps, overlaps, and the clients' values, goals, and needs. Other assessments include data on existing integration efforts, community capacities, and community readiness for integration efforts. As valuable as these tools are, O'Looney argued that they are insufficient in several respects. (1) They usually do not systematically chart which human or physical resources might potentially be available for more integrated development. (2) Typical assessment tools usually do not chart exactly how flexible particular funding streams are, nor do they aggregate findings to provide a picture of how much discretion there is in the system and exactly where, how, and what amount of resources can be moved from one area to another. (3) Need assessments typically do not provide planners with a sense of what level of crisis services the community is willing to forgo in order to provide for coming generations, i.e., it is possible for a few special needs children or families in crisis to consume the pool of budgeted resources for social services in a community. Unless need assessments address the issues of where, how, and how much rationing of crisis services will be needed in order to invest in prevention services, it is unlikely that communities will receive the services they seek.

Providing Benchmarks, Focus, and Orientation

Since service integration involves many complex tasks, many service systems may be discouraged by the breadth and depth of the tasks and by their seeming or real lack of progress. To counter this, O'Looney suggested that is it useful for states to provide guidance in the form of "markers of progress" or benchmarks. It also may be worthwhile to choose a limited number of tasks on which to focus and to measure progress during a limited time period, e.g. two or three years. Such a focus helps communities experience some short-term success. Also, providing orientation is not intended to create a "cookie-cutter approach" but rather to recognize that even though each community may start from a different place and progress differently, after a period of time every community needs to have certain features in place and to have made some progress along some line of development.

Attending to Governance Issues

Governance issues involve a number of levels of collaborative activity, e.g., state-to-local, regional-to-local, etc. While each level is important, state-to-local issues are paramount when it comes to gaining satisfactory support from state personnel who manage important programs at the local level. If one is going to develop a common intake/eligibility system at school sites, state bureaucrats and policymakers will have to be supportive. On the other hand, if they play such a large role that they appear to "own" the initiative, local sites may withdraw support. Hence, joint state-local planning and governance is essential from the start.

Assuring that the State Provides Behavioral Examples

Local integration sites need to hear continually from state administrators that service integration is a priority. More importantly, local sites need to see that state agencies demonstrate such practices as shared funding, joint program development, coordinated grant application and reporting, co-located or shared staff, and cross-training.

Providing Training

Training can be of three types provided in the following sequence: (1) orientation to motivate community, school, and agency leaders to begin integration efforts; (2) collaboration training to bring together agency and school planners for a specific reason, e.g., joint budgeting; and (3) specific training to transform agency-based staff who have the knowledge and authority to work across service provider organizations to meet family needs.

Research and Development Tasks

O'Looney elaborated on several research and development possibilities. He also raised the question of how do we measure the success of "a thousand marginal blessings" spread over time and arrive at a definitive answer to the question: does service integration work? He acknowledged that social science research can contribute broad understandings of the potential costs and benefits of particular trade-offs in the abstract but cannot easily estimate how they might affect the social, cultural, and ethical fabrics of specific communities. For example, the decision to deny replacement organs to elderly persons in order to free up resources for a pre-school program may represent a reasonable and ethical choice in one community; however, in another, the decision might weaken the community's moral legitimacy. As such, the allocation of resources is less a research issue and more a matter of developing community understanding of the moral parameters in which choices are made.

O'Looney suggested that it might be worthwhile for the federal government to fund a few "real experiments" to "lab test" the integrated service delivery technology. By "real

experiments," he was referring to testing a pre-ordained model that has several features in place prior to evaluating the results. While a number of initiatives have been funded, few if any have arrived at a point where all of the features actually are in place. This is so because forces working against full-fledged integration (e.g., categorical funding, organizational autonomy, interagency rivalry, and staff resistance) typically have been too strong to overcome. Hence, we only have had a number of partial tests of a theory that, by its very nature, is not easily proven. He also raised the following dilemma in program development by asking whether we should (1) design programs for the broad group of at-risk children and families, with only the hope of sometimes including the very high risk ones who are likely to pose the most severe problems in the future, or (2) target those at highest risk while attempting to improve outreach and monitoring, knowing that other agencies have worked with these families without success and that the resources needed to have success with such families may be more than are available.

Epstein suggested further study of such exemplary programs as New Jersey's School-Based Youth Services Program that includes sites in rural areas in order to gain better information about effective service integration. Some sites have been operating for several years and have solved some of the common problems of interagency collaboration.

Stephens observed that the resolution of many of these issues will be political decisions that will not be based on such things as cost analysis studies. O'Looney concurred but added that since the political decision is somewhat abstract, we may not be able to engage the energy of politicians or excite them (except in relatively simplistic terms) until they hear local people saying, "yes, this is a good program." He observed that they still see it as a program rather than a system change.

VII. CONCLUDING PERSPECTIVES

In this section, the co-authors add their concluding views: Grove presents an overall description of the diverse perspectives emerging from the symposium, Stephens presents several policy perspectives and implications, and Bhaerman presents several program perspectives and implications.

Diverse Perspectives Emerging from the Symposium
Richard Grove

Two very distinctive and apparently incompatible perspectives emerged as the symposium progressed. In the literature on educational paradigms, these perspectives have been labeled as "technical-rational" and "hermeneutic or critical." Although the hermeneutic and critical usually are regarded as two very different perspectives, those participants who spoke from those perspectives tended to unite in their opposition to the more traditional technical-rational perspective. Thus, the two fundamentally different perspectives that emerged can be described as dichotomous in terms of the type of change process called for, the type of decision-making process called for, the roles of participants in both change and decision-making processes, rationale, guiding ethics, definition of community, function of government, conceptual models, and guiding metaphor.

Two Perspectives

During the symposium, those participants who spoke from the technical-rational perspective embraced a "top-down" change process, calling for various kinds of systemic reform initiatives that begin with policy-making activities. In fact, this perspective could well be described as policy-driven. The decision-making process of those engaged in the change or reform efforts was described as being centralized with decisions primarily being made by professionals who are regarded as having the necessary expertise to make sound decisions. Thus, the roles of participants tended to be delineated essentially between professionals or specialists who deliver services and clients who receive those services.

The rationale set forth for the technical-rational perspective was one of economic competitiveness, i.e., that client services must ultimately enhance the economic viability of rural communities in which the clients reside. The guiding ethics of such a rationale are those of effectiveness and efficiency. Under this rationale, community was described as a "place," i.e., as existing within clear geographic boundaries.

As indicated above, the function of government under the technical-rational perspective was suggested to be that of fashioning policies and mandates. Conceptual models used to carry forth this work were described by the participants as being medical and economic, which implies that clients have problems or weaknesses that can be remediated by constructing ways for resources to flow to them. Finally, the guiding metaphor of the perspective was described as "a seamless web" of service delivery. Those who advanced the counter-perspective wanted to know who within this monolithic web was the spider and who was the fly.

On the other hand, those participants who spoke from the hermeneutic-critical perspective embraced a "bottom-up" change process, calling for a diversity of local restructuring initiatives that begin with community deliberation. This perspective could well be described as dialogue-driven. The decision-making process of those engaged in the change or reform efforts was described as being decentralized with decisions primarily being made by those who will be affected by them. Thus, the roles of participants tended to be delineated

essentially between outside helpers or change facilitators who are generalists and local entrepreneurs who are producers of goods or services.

The rationale set forth for the hermeneutic-critical perspective was one of community sustainability, i.e., seeking to help rural communities continue to exist as viable entities on their own terms. The guiding ethics of such a rationale are those of empowerment and a respect for diversity. Under this rationale, community was described as a "capacity to achieve greater self-determination," i.e., in terms of the diverse human and social capitals that exist in each community as strengths to be drawn upon.

The function of government under the hermeneutic-critical perspective was suggested to be that of enabling change at the local level. The community model was described by participants as being appropriate to carry forth this work, implying that local people know what is best for them and need only be supported in their efforts. Finally, the guiding metaphor of the perspective was described as "a safety net." Those who advanced the counter-perspective wondered if proponents were really asking rural people to work without any net at all.

Beyond the Two Perspectives

The clash of these perspectives is nothing new in the field of education. It seems to those of us who sponsored the symposium that each side had something important to say. However, we were left to wonder if there is some middle ground that would validate both perspectives and bring them into some kind of functional relationship. In reviewing our notes from the symposium, we discovered a concept that might prove useful in this regard, i.e., the concept of the continuum.

Two kinds of continua were described by symposium participants. The first was used to identify different kinds of family/school/community partnerships as being either cooperative, coordinated, or collaborative. The significance of the continuum is that as a partnership moves from being cooperative to coordinated and from coordinated to collaborative, the partnership becomes more authentic in that formal roles begin to fade and blur and levels of mutual commitment rise. The second continuum was one that distinguished community change efforts as being either community-focused, community-driven, or community-centered. Again, authenticity increases as one proceeds along the continuum.

The point is this: such a continuum might be extremely useful to rural schools when they are trying to forge, nurture, and develop specific family/school/community partnerships. Such a continuum recognizes the apparently divergent perspectives as indicative of stages in developing authentic partnerships. Thus, aspects of the technical-rational perspective might be appropriate for new partnerships while aspects of the hermeneutic-critical perspective might be appropriate for partnerships that have begun to take root.

Can "bottom-up" meet "top-down?" The answer is not clear. But before choosing one side or the other, the real and often harsh realities of the rural world will simply not allow those of us who would help to become so embroiled in our own arguments that nothing gets done.

Policy Perspectives and Implications
E. Robert Stephens

The two-day dialogue raised many interesting points and challenging issues that must be addressed in further discussions of the concept of the rural school serving as both the community learning center as well as the community service center. This is, of course, to be expected when one gathers around a table ten individuals with impressive credentials in

several different disciplines and then asks them to converse about a rich concept in a relatively structured way. My experience with this activity served as a reminder of the many merits resulting from the use of this approach. There simply is no acceptable substitute for an approach of this type nor are there short-cuts to the serious discussion of important ideas.

Also, as expected, pursuing the goal of redesigning rural schools as community learning and service centers forces one to address, early on, a number of critical policy issues. I have singled out several of what I regard to be extraordinarily important issues that were, in part, suggested by the panelists and, in part, reflect my own views of what will be required to move the concept from a vision of what is possible to a reality.

The issues to be cited are organized into two broad categories:

- how is the concept to become public policy?
- how are rural schools to acquire the necessary institutional capacity to serve as the community learning and service center?

How is the Concept to Become Public Policy?

The implementation of the concept that is potentially of great consequence to many and, thus, is surrounded by differing economic, social, and political interests poses many difficulties.

The panelists argued that any policy promoting the concept must be flexible, incrementally implemented, state as well as substate-specific, against the use of mandates, and in support of capacity building as the policy instrument of choice in furthering the adoption of the concept.

While I agree that the notion of scaling-up has merit, I also believe that inducements, especially fiscal incentives and disincentives, will be required. This is particularly true for the service center part of the concept.

Moreover, and importantly, it would seem to be imperative that for the concept to flourish, it must be reflected in both policy language and in program language of federal, state, and local agencies and organizations engaged in rural development.

How reasonable is it to expect this to occur? Unfortunately, it is not very promising. For example, many observers would agree that there is no single federal policy for rural development in this country at the present time. Further, most also would likely agree with a conclusion reached in a recent General Accounting Office (1994) report on rural development that argued, "The many complex and narrowly focused programs...are an inefficient surrogate for a single federal policy for economic development in rural areas" (p.4). Moreover, the report concluded that the coordinating group established by the 1990 Presidential Initiative on Rural Development to address common problems and enhance coordination among federal departments and agencies has had little impact on improving the delivery of federal assistance to rural areas, primarily because it lacked the authority to resolve problems. Though some states have a much better track record than does the federal government in promoting rural development, many observers suggest that most do not.

The Office of Technnology Assessment's (1991) profile of who some of the major actors are in the rural development field at the federal, state, and local levels is instructive for illustrating part of the difficulty surrounding the need for coordination of rural policy development and implementation. The OTA profile, "Rural America at the Crossroads: Networking for the Future," includes a large number of primary agencies at all levels who have a stock in rural development.

The difficulties of reflecting the concept in a largely uncoordinated policy environment notwithstanding, this is only part of the implementation issue. Few would likely argue with the position that the rural school is the most logical hub to serve as the community learning center. On the other hand, considerable controversy is certain to surround the second part of the concept, i.e, the role of the school in serving as the community service center.

There seems to be something approaching a consensus that holds that education can be a good coordinating point for the integration of services, but, as cautioned by many, education's role here will be limited because it lacks the enforcement power to bring about greater coordination. A policy implication, then, is this: can, or should, education be given primary responsibility for coordination, or should it serve in a supportive role, absent state statutory authority to do so?

A recently released report by the Research and Policy Committee of the Council of Economic Development (1994) raises still other cautions that illustrate the direction that the policy debates surrounding the concept of the rural school as the community service center will likely take. The CED report recommends that (1) groups other than schools must pay for and provide the health and social services that children need to succeed academically, and (2) these services may be placed in the schools -- and delivered through the schools -- but not be made the responsibility of the schools.

Acquiring the Capacity to Serve?

The second category of issues that must be successfully addressed if the concept of the rural school serving as the community learning and service center is to be realized relates to the institutional capacity of a rural school to play this role.

Many rural systems typically possess a number of the requisite building blocks to serve in this role, as the panelists have correctly pointed out. However, not all do. Especially critical is the relatively widespread poor fiscal posture of many of the nation's rural systems, as well as the marginal conditions of the physical facilities of many to support any major new redesign initiative, no matter how meritorious it might be.

Further, it should be clear that rural systems must have affordable access to the information-age technologies, particularly if they are to serve as the community learning center and the community service center as well. Rural communities and their schools are currently lagging behind the rest of the country in building the communication infrastructure necessary to gain access to the national information network, e.g., informational technologies, access and transmission of technologies, and network technologies.

While the present high stakes debate over many of the features of a national technology "policy" have yet to be concluded, this much seems clear:

- the private sector will own and operate the National Information Infrastructure (NII);
- the choice of transmission technology to use in the NII is to be left to the private sector; and
- education is not likely to be given any preferred status but rather will be treated as any other customer in the marketplace.

A high priority, therefore, must be given to the issues of affordable access to information-age technologies. It seems improbable, however, that all rural communities and their schools can be expected to have the capacity to acquire the infrastructure needed to join the NII when acting alone.

This situation will likely raise the issue of appropriate use of inducements to encourage neighboring rural schools and communities to join together in some sort of area or regional collaborative. Should the use of this policy option be followed, as I believe it of necessity will be, then the question of what criteria are to be used by the external funding agency providing the inducements in the awarding grants will need to be addressed.

The issue of institutional capacity is, of course, especially acute for rural systems located in persistent poverty counties as well as those situated in non-metropolitan counties that are not adjacent to metropolitan areas. The fiscal and fiscally-related difficulties of schools and communities in these regions are clearly compounded.

Concluding Comments

In conclusion, the issues surrounding the question of implementation and the question of the institutional capacity of rural schools, only briefly sketched here, are critical ones to address as the dialogue on the concept of the rural schools serving as the community learning and service center moves to the next level.

Obviously the way that I framed the issues, and the rough sequence in which they are arranged, reflect my initial biases as well as a number of assumptions I am willing to make. Though the few issues cited are formidable, I nonetheless remain even more supportive of the concept since it offers one of the best policy choices available for preserving the quality of education and, consequently, the quality of life for much of rural America.

Program Perspectives and Implications
Robert Bhaerman

My perspective is based on an optimistic belief that it is important, and necessary, to enhance the mission of the rural school. Thus, when asked at the symposium about my own assumptions, I answered, "Yes, I believe designing rural schools as community learning and service centers is possible and a good thing."

Moreover, throughout the symposium, a number of very useful suggestions were made that can guide us in program development, e.g., the broad outline of tasks relating to forging solid foundations through community and economic development, and the numerous specific tasks relating to family/school/community partnerships, school-to-work transition, and service integration. We also have the important strategy offered by Joyce Epstein, namely, the development of action-oriented teams to guide the process.

Most importantly, we realize that we do not have to begin at "ground zero," since a number of excellent resources and resource organizations will help us with specific aspects of the task. For example, with regard to family/school/community partnerships, we can build on the experiences and insights of such organizations as the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning and its partners, including the Institute for Responsive Education, Boston University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Illinois, Yale University, and Wheelock College. With regard to school-to-work transition, we have available the resources of all of the states as well as federal government through the School-to-Work Opportunities Act that supports school-based and worked-based efforts as well as strategies that connect the two efforts. With regard to service integration, we have the highly valuable guidelines developed by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services in Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services (Melaville and Blank with Asayesh, 1993) as well as the National Center for Service Integration's series of resource briefs. The list of resources can go on. The point is that we

should build on these knowledge bases and, most importantly, remember that although rural schools and communities often may be isolated, they are not alone.

At the outset of the symposium, I presented the notion of the "Olympic Rings." Now I see them more as a chain-link fence, not around the school ground as separating barriers, but as a chain that binds rural schools and their communities. As a result of the symposium, I also have my own new guiding metaphor that likens the program design process to building a house. Clearly there is no one way to design rural schools as community learning and service centers -- or to build a house. Except you have to start from the "bottom-up," it seems to me. One cannot "impose" a house from the "top-down." We have to develop a comprehensive plan in each community with the meaningful involvement of the citizens of that community who will "live" in the house. We must build it so that the resulting structure will not topple when the first ill-wind comes blowing in from far-right field, a wind that professes that the schools' job is to teach the "3 Rs" -- and do little or nothing else.

In rural areas -- in earlier times -- home construction often was the result of townspeople getting together, putting up the framework, and completing various tasks to finish the job -- sometimes in a day, usually no longer than a week. Designing rural schools as community learning and service centers seems a lot like that -- except it surely will take much longer. We must build on strengths, make certain that solid foundations exist, overcome structural weaknesses (patch any holes, as it were), perform specific design tasks, and continually look for ways to improve the resulting effort through ongoing research and development. To carry the metaphor one step further, I envision a community learning and service center -- a house, if you will -- that utilizes the blueprint depicted at the end of this monograph.

I believe that the building process must be incremental, i.e., the structure might best be built one room at a time. Two aphorisms apply here: we should not bite off more than we initially can chew, and we should remember that Rome was not built in a day. Lastly, the following insights from a variety of sages from the past provide several "guideposts" that we should keep in mind:

- Three guiding principles. Three things are to looked to in a building: that it stand on the right spot; that it be securely founded; that it be successfully executed. (Goethe, 1749-1832)

- Build on solid foundations. A foolish man, which build his house upon the sand. (Matthew, 7:26)

- The principle of utility. If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful -- or believe to be beautiful. (William Morris, 1839-1896)

- Strategic planning. Set thine house in order. (1st Book of Chronicles, 20:1)

- A collaborative effort. If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. (Mark, 3:25)

- A place for all in the community. The tragic house, the house with nobody in it. (Joyce Kilmer, 1886-1918)

- A safe haven for all. One's home is the safest refuge to everyone. (Sir Edward Coke, 1552-1634)

The school/community programs illustrated in the blueprint are based on the vision that, ultimately, it should be impossible to tell where the school door ends and the community door begins. Schmuck and Schmuck (1992) envision two-way partnerships in which students and adults cooperatively contribute to the community's well-being and in which students generate their own plans for community and economic development. At the center of that vision is a school where the community comes to work and study and seek assistance, a "school that can be everybody's house" (p.176). Research for Better Schools will work with its colleagues in the field to advance the vision that the school, indeed, is "everybody's house." We hope you will be one of those working with us.

CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE

This report of the symposium has laid the groundwork for establishing a national dialogue on issues relating to designing -- and redesigning -- rural schools as community learning and service centers. We view the initial discussion as simply the "opening salvo," as it were, in a much broader dialogue. Had we selected ten different experts for the symposium, it is likely we would have surfaced ten different sets of perspectives and a variety of other issues, assumptions, and tasks. Now we are seeking your perspectives.

Using a similar set of questions that were posed to the participants, we ask you to reflect on and respond to these questions:

- What are other key dimensions and basic assumptions of designing rural schools as community learning and service centers?
- Are there any additional learning and/or service areas that should be explored?
- What are some additional barriers to, facilitators of, and unique concerns regarding designing rural schools as community learning and service centers?
- What must be done to further these agendas? What additional resources are needed? What gaps must be overcome? What linkages must be made? What are the priorities?
- How can rural schools meet the needs of poor, underserved, and underrepresented people?
- What additional research questions and development activities need to be pursued?

Please send your responses to Dr. Robert Bhaerman, Senior Research and Development Specialist, Research for Better Schools, 444 North Third Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19123-4107. Let us hear from you.

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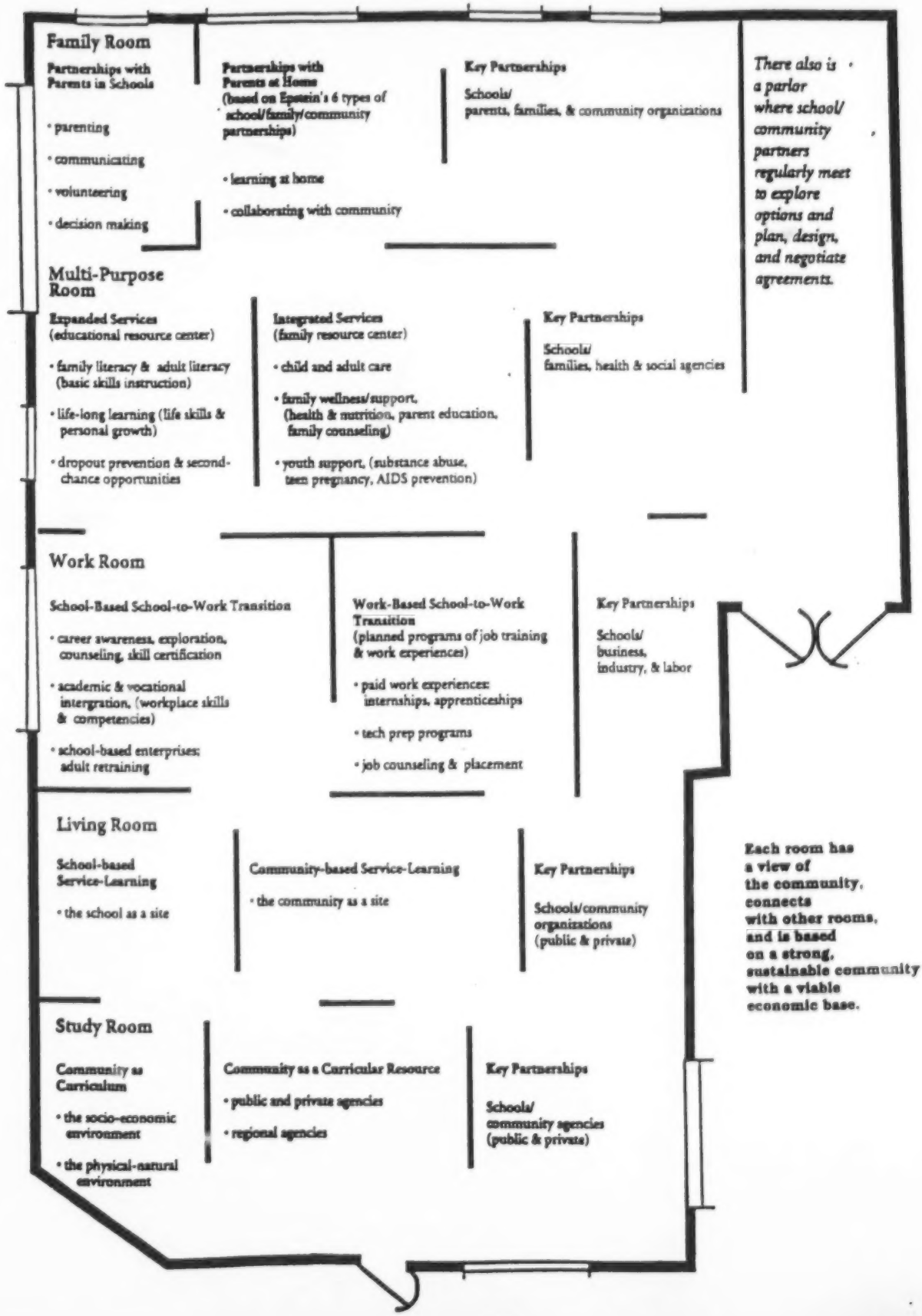
A Blueprint for Designing Schools as Community Learning and Service Centers


Family Room
Partnerships with Parents in Schools
• parenting
• communicating
• volunteering
• decision making
Partnerships with Parents at Home (based on Epstein's 6 types of school/family/community partnerships)
• learning at home
• collaborating with community
Key Partnerships
Schools/ parents, families, & community organizations
There also is a parlor where school/ community partners regularly meet to explore options and plan, design, and negotiate agreements.
Multi-Purpose Room
Expanded Services (educational resource center)
• family literacy & adult literacy (basic skills instruction)
• life-long learning (life skills & personal growth)
• dropout prevention & second-chance opportunities
Integrated Services (family resource center)
• child and adult care
• family wellness/support, (health & nutrition, parent education, family counseling)
• youth support, (substance abuse, teen pregnancy, AIDS prevention)
Key Partnerships
Schools/ families, health & social agencies
Work Room
School-Based School-to-Work Transition
• career awareness, exploration, counseling, skill certification
• academic & vocational intergration, (workplace skills & competencies)
• school-based enterprises; adult retraining
Work-Based School-to-Work Transition (planned programs of job training & work experiences)
• paid work experiences: internships, apprenticeships
• tech prep programs
• job counseling & placement
Key Partnerships
Schools/ business, industry, & labor
Living Room
School-based Service-Learning
• the school as a site
Community-based Service-Learning
• the community as a site
Key Partnerships
Schools/community organizations (public & private)
Each room has a view of the community, connects with other rooms, and is based on a strong, sustainable community with a viable economic base.
Study Room
Community as Curriculum
• the socio-economic environment
• the physical-natural environment
Community as a Curricular Resource
• public and private agencies
• regional agencies
Key Partnerships
Schools/ community agencies (public & private)